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Babylonian deity Marduk, and between Esther and the Babylonian goddess Ishtar, though he admits that much uncertainty remains as to the exact Babylonian counterpart of the Purim feast:

It appears that, while the feast of Purim is probably borrowed either directly from Babylonia, or indirectly by way of Persia, no certainty has yet been reached as to the precise Babylonian feast from which it is derived. The story which accompanies it has many points of similarity to Babylonian mythology, but no close counterpart to it has yet been discovered in Babylonian literature.

A curious phenomenon of the Book of Esther is the omission of the name of God. Various explanations have been suggested, and some have sought to remove the peculiarity by finding anagrams of the divine name in certain passages. The author very properly rejects these fanciful endeavors, and suggests that the right explanation may be found in the occasion for which the book was written:

Esther was meant to be read at the annual merrymaking of Purim, for which the Mishna lays down the rule that people are to drink until they are unable to distinguish between "Blessed be Mordecai!" and "Cursed be Haman!" On such occasions the name of God might be profaned, if it occurred in the reading; and, therefore, it was deemed best to omit it altogether.

Professor Paton does not hold a very high estimate of the moral and religious value of Esther.

The book [says he] is so conspicuously lacking in religion that it should never have been included in the Canon of the Old Testament, but should have been left with Judith and Tobit among the apocryphal writings.

And he expresses full agreement with the words of Luther, "I am so hostile to this book that I wish it did not exist, for it Judaizes too much and has too much heathen naughtiness."

The foregoing illustrations may be sufficient to indicate the general attitude of the commentary. The reader may hesitate at times to follow Professor Paton all the way, but no one who desires to understand the Book of Esther can afford to disregard this volume, for undoubtedly it is without equal in the English language, and in many respects it is superior to commentaries in other languages.

FREDERICK CARL EISELEN

GARRETT BIBLICAL INSTITUTE
EVANSTON, ILLINOIS

Old Testament Miracles in the Light of the Gospels. By A. ALLEN
BROCKINGTON, M.D. Edinburgh: Clark; New York: Scrib-
ners, 1907. Pp. 144. \$1.25.

The main thesis of Mr. Brockington's book is that miracles are to be regarded as signs of spiritual truth rather than as proofs of divine power.

"We are not to be concerned with establishing the credibility of miracles but with interpreting their meaning. Our duty toward signs is the same as our duty toward parables. We do not go about to prove that the parables were spoken by Jesus Christ or that they could have been spoken by him, we strive to understand them" (p. 21). "Miracles," we are told again, "are doctrine" (p. 11). This thesis might be used in the interest of a pious rationalism. But nothing could be farther from Mr. Brockington's intention. He believes most devoutly in miracle as a matter of fact. He even goes so far as to assert that "the bar to a belief in miracles is a moral bar. We are sceptical because we do not wish to acknowledge the claims of Christ." (p. 21).

After defending his thesis on the basis of the Gospel of John Mr. Brockington proceeds to apply it to the miracles of the Old Testament, but with very indifferent success. The miracles of the Old Testament as signs are further regularly correlated with the miracles of Christ. But little attempt is made to go beyond the obvious, and where it is done the correlations are not obvious enough. The sign of the manna is fulfilled in Christ the bread, the sign of the water from the rock is fulfilled in Christ who gives the living water, etc. The plagues of Egypt as a sign (why not an evidential proof?) of the sovereignty of the Lord is correlated with the creative miracle at Cana, the passage through the Red Sea, with Christ's walking on the water, etc. But Mr. Brockington unfortunately cannot keep away from apologetic suggestions. Thus he raises the question why miracles have ceased and answers it by saying, "because we have learned or ought to have learned all that miracles were meant to teach. Because we know that the whole round world is subject to God and God is love. Because we do not need miracles when we have learned to recognize signs" (p. 30). In itself this is an interesting observation but some reader might draw from it the larger inference that it is not necessary to believe in a miraculous religion at all if only one believes in a thoroughly spiritual religion.

Again, the discussion of Baalam's ass as a sign is almost lost sight of in the apologetic interest. It is not quite fair, we are told, to join the talking ass with the talking serpent or with the sun standing still. These latter phenomena are found in passages that are evidently figurative or poetical. But the talking ass is in a historical narrative vouched for by II Peter 2:16. We are therefore to receive it. And why not? Does not God employ certain agents in carrying out his purposes and if the usual agents fail are God's purposes to be frustrated? If there is no man to rebuke the madness of the prophet, is the madness of the prophet to

go unrebuked? Various expedients were tried to bring Baalam to his senses. The ass turned into the field, then he crushed Baalam's foot, then he lay down under Baalam. Only after these attempts had failed did God open the mouth of the ass (!). In other words the last conceivable means had been exhausted when the ass lay down under Baalam. Nothing was left but miracle. But it is not a very difficult miracle after all. "An ass is much higher in the scale of being than a stone" says Mr. Brockington, and yet Jesus said that lifeless stones should cry out in order to praise God. Mr. Brockington is not quite sure of this argument himself, however, for he adds in an apologetic footnote, "Even if the language of our Lord be regarded as figurative it is clear that he contemplates an unusual agent" (p. 118). Perhaps it may seem unfair for a reviewer to select the most grotesque paragraph in the book as an illustration of its general character, but while the results of Mr. Brockington's mental processes are not usually so startling as in the present instance, the mental processes themselves are elsewhere about the same.

The thought that miracles can be better understood and that they are more edifying when they are construed as "doctrine," that is, when they are regarded as an integral part of the revelation in Christ, is a helpful thought, though not a very new one, but the way in which this thought has been worked out in the present book hardly deserves the prefatory recommendation, guarded though it is, of the Bishop of Gloucester.

KEMPER FULLERTON

OBERLIN, OHIO

The Christian Faith and the Old Testament. By JOHN M. THOMAS.
New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., 1908. Pp. x+133. \$1.

President Thomas dedicates his volume to the congregation of the Arlington Avenue Presbyterian Church, East Orange, N. J., in sincere gratitude for increasing liberty of pulpit utterance and the friends of Middlebury College in earnest hope. The author has only recently relinquished the pastorate at East Orange in order to take up the duties of the presidency at Middlebury. The book is an excellent illustration of the good service a parish can render to the cause of Christianity by encouraging a true man to be his whole self while ministering to it. In the confident possession of the truth, Dr. Thomas proceeds to present it in just such language and style as culture affords him at the moment of utterance. The result is a book that will help any unprejudiced reader who is interested in the subject.

The book might be described as a work on The Misuse and the True